

Subject: Indian Peace medal found  
at a Chippewa gravesite  
near Red Lake, MN

Hilger, M. Inez, Sister  
[Altoona, WI]

1935

C O P Y

February 28, 1935

Director  
United States Mint  
Philadelphia  
Pennsylvania

My dear Sir:

Will you kindly tell me whether the United States Mint struck the medals which were given to the delegations of Indians who came to Washington to make treaties or to plead their cause?

In 1932 several graves of Indians on the Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota were exhumed in order to give the right of way for the building of a road. Among the remains a medal was found of which the enclosed is a reproduction. Judging from information gathered at the Red Lake Agency and from the Indians on the Reservation, the medal must have been bestowed on a Chippewa chief about 1826.

The words above the clasped hands are "Peace and" and the one below is "friendship". On the reverse side of the medal is the remainder of what was evidently a profile of some person's head. The relief is badly corroded but looks like Washington's profile.

I am anxious to identify the medal as part of a study of Chippewa culture and shall be grateful for any information you may be able give me.

Very sincerely yours,

Sister M. Inez Hilger



C O P Y

Treasury Department  
United Mint Service  
Philadelphia, Pa.

March 11, 1935

Sister M. Inez Hilger,  
St. Mary's Academy,  
Altoona, Wisconsin

Dear Madam:-

Reference is made to your letter of recent date.

The United States Government during the Presidency of Washington adopted the policy of presenting medals to the various Indian chiefs who visited the nation's capitol, but these medals were more often given by army officers on the frontier, who were representing the Government in making treaties with the various Indian tribes and at the councils where they were trying to win the friendship of the Indians. These medals became known as "Indian Peace Medals". The French and British both had been giving such medals many years prior to the adoption of the policy by our Government.

The first known medal given by our Government dates around 1789, which was before the establishment of the mint. These early medals were not struck from dies but were ovals of silver with the design engraved on each medal separately. After the establishment of the mint, the medals were struck from dies in the usual manner with the design in relief. Similar medals were also given by the various fur trading companies.

The medal described in this letter has the same REVERSE as that of the medals given by the Astor Fur Trading Co., except that it is smaller in size and does not have the word FORT UNION at the top and the letters U.M.Q. at the bottom. The OBVERSE no doubt carried a portrait of Washington which had been struck in a die (the famous Wright die) then pierced out and soldered on the plain field of the medal, which may have been of a different metal. The New York Numismatic Society (156th Street and Broadway, New York City) has in its collection one such medal as is described here. It is very rare and practically nothing is known about its origin, who made them and by whom presented to the Indians. They were not United States Government medals. I would suggest that you write to the above mentioned Society, who may be able to shed more light on the question.

Very truly yours,

Superintendent



# St. Mary's Academy

Altoona, Wisconsin

April 5, 1935

The Secretary  
The New York Numismatic Society  
156th Street and Broadway  
New York City, N.Y.

My dear Sir:

I am writing to you relative to a medal found in the grave of an Indian chief on the Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota. The copies of my letter to the United States Mint and the reply of the Superintendent of the Mint are enclosed. Would it be possible for you to give me any further information in the identification of the medal? Or if that is impossible, can you suggest any one else to who I might write for information?

I shall appreciate any information you may give me.

Very sincerely yours,

Sister M. Lucy Hilger

Aster medal not made  
before 1833

Mineral Point Wis  
thought to be about 1835

April 8, 1935.

Sister M. Inez Hilger  
St. Mary's Academy  
Altoona, Wisconsin.

Dear Sister:

The Indian peace medal that you write about is most interesting. Up to date we have the only known specimen of this medal, which was found some years ago at Mineral Point, Wisconsin. It is not a governmental medal but may have been given out by some fur company or by some private expedition or group of travellers. As the reverse was made from the same die as was used on the Astor medal, the date of the making of the piece in question could not have been before 1833 when the Astor medal was made. As the Astor Fur Company went to considerable expense in making these dies their die must have been the original die. This is all we can tell you about the medal, nor do we know of anyone who could give you any more information.

Very truly yours,

HW:JG

Curator



# St. Mary's Academy

Altoona, Wisconsin

May 6, 1935

Mr. Howland Wood  
Curator, The American Numismatic Society  
New York City, New York

My dear Mr. Wood:

I should like to submit my study of the medal found in the old Chippewa grave at Red Lake to the Minnesota Historical Society for publication and I am writing you to ask your permission to publish your letter of April 8, 1935, in connection with it . I shall consider this permission a distinct favor, Mr. Wood.

Very sincerely yours,

*Sister R. Inez Hilger.*

May 8, 1935.

Sister M. Inez Hilger  
St. Mary's Academy  
Altoona, Wisconsin.

Dear Sister:

You have my permission to  
publish my letter of April 8th concern-  
ing the medal found in the old Chippewa  
grave at Red Lake.

Very truly yours,

HW:JG

Curator